



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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## First U.S.–African Union Talks Open in Washington

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The first U.S.–African Union High Level Bilateral Meetings opened at the U.S. Department of State April 21 with the goal of broadening the U.S.–African Union (AU) relationship and deepening the level of engagement between both parties.

Deputy Secretary of State Jacob Lew welcomed the AU delegation, headed by the chairperson of the African Union Commission, Jean Ping. The three-day session will include visits by the delegation to other U.S. government departments and talks with Cabinet officials such as U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and U.S. Trade Rep-

resentative Ron Kirk. Plans call for the meeting to be held annually.

Welcoming the delegation, Lew said the United States is “excited” to host such a meeting with the AU to discuss common priorities for Africa and ways to strengthen the U.S.-AU relationship.

“The United States is a strong  
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## African Banker Previews White House Entrepreneurship Summit

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The April 26–27 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship will offer entrepreneurs from around the world the chance to learn from each other, work together and create a bridge of understanding that will help build a new level of prosperity worldwide, according to a banker from Cameroon who will travel to Washington to participate in the summit.

Alamine Ousmane Mey, chief executive officer of Afriland



First Bank of Cameroon — his nation’s third-largest — made that point in an interview with America.gov before leaving to attend the Washington event. Mey is one of three entrepreneurs who will represent Cameroon.

Pointing out that the summit is a direct outgrowth of President Obama’s June 4, 2009,

Cairo speech to the Muslim world, Mey said that speech called for a new way of doing things, a new beginning and changes in the ways people think — particularly in education and communication. Mey stressed the importance of people working together to promote trade rather than just relying on aid, all in pro-

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## First U.S.-African Union Talks Open in Washington . . .

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supporter of the African Union — an organization with 53 African states and over a billion citizens,” he said. The AU is “increasingly the institution that we turn to to help resolve some of Africa’s most intractable issues.” Lew said the United States is one of only two nations that have a dedicated ambassador to the African Union and is the largest supporter of the AU’s peace and security programs.

Lew called the African Union “an essential institution for defending our common principles of democracy and governance. The African Union’s courageous stance against unconstitutional changes in governments in Mauritania, Guinea, Niger and Madagascar deserve much praise. The members of the African Union have made a clear decision that the AU will not be a club for generals and dictators, and we applaud the strong steps the organization has taken in this regard.”

While cautioning that democracies are never perfect, Lew pledged that the United States stands ready to help any country striving to strengthen its own democratic institutions.

Lew praised the African Union for its “pre-eminent role” in African peacekeeping, particularly in Somalia and Sudan, and pledged that the AU has the full support of the United States for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). “Achieving stability in Somalia and avoiding further bloodshed in Darfur is tremendously important for the region and for the United States,” he said.

In addition, Lew told the delegation that the United States is counting on the AU to support its global health and food security initiative. The United States is also committed to working with Africa to help boost agricultural productivity, he said.

Lew echoed President Obama’s remarks during the president’s visit to Accra, Ghana ([http://www.america.gov/obama\\_ghana.html](http://www.america.gov/obama_ghana.html)), noting that Africa is a fundamental part of the interconnected world. He reiterated the Obama administration’s deep commitment to Africa and to fostering the development of institutions like the AU.

“We believe the pursuit of peace and prosperity in Africa is very directly in the interest of the United States and the American people, and finding ways to better support our shared objective will be the focus of our discussions,” he said.

Commission Chairperson Ping said his organization is convinced that Africa and the United States can easily design and build a 21st-century relationship based on shared values, mutual respect, confidence, commitment and partnership.

“Africa and the United States have had a long history of cooperation and are bound together by strong economic, social and cultural ties, but “such cooperation has been mainly at the bilateral level,” he said.

“Now it is clear that the world has been marked by tremendous changes, particularly globalization, the arrival of new players such as civil society, the advent of a new era of empowerment and, above all, the visibility and surge of re-

gional organizations and groupings such as the African Union, the European Union and Mercosur [the Latin American trading bloc of countries].”

New threats have emerged, Lew said. Terrorism, the global financial crisis, piracy, illicit drugs and related problems, organized crime, criminal trafficking and climate change are all assuming greater prominence on the global agenda, he said, and no longer can be addressed by one country alone. “All of our threats to global security call for global solidarity,” he said.

Africa has a “duty and responsibility” to address its challenges, he said, particularly in the areas of poverty, underdevelopment, democratic governance, health, food security and conflict management.

Ping said the African Union Commission — which he chairs — is the body charged with executing the objectives and mission of the African Union. That, he said, ends with the dream of an independent and strong Africa in a position of comparative advantage vis-à-vis the world and a continent whose concerns are seriously solicited and considered worldwide.

The AU is pursuing four major objectives in its strategy for the continent, Ping said: peace and security; development; shared values; and institutional and human capacity building. He said progress has been made in all four areas.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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## African Banker Previews White House Entrepreneurship Summit . . .

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motion of one goal: “to build a new world based on peace, security and prosperity.”

“As a banker and entrepreneur in Africa, and in Cameroon in particular, I look forward to the opportunity to attend the summit, interact with people from America and other countries. It is an opportunity to learn from each other ... to be an ambassador or social entrepreneur to address all of the problems President Obama mentioned in his Cairo speech,” he said.

“The summit,” Mey said, “is just the beginning of the whole process” of getting to a higher level of understanding and achieving greater prosperity worldwide through partnership.

Focusing on entrepreneurship, job creation and community development, the summit will bring together approximately 200 successful entrepreneurs from more than 50 countries. Its goals are to identify ways to advance economic and social entrepreneurship, build networks among stakeholders in entrepreneurship, and provide an opportunity to establish partnerships that advance entrepreneurship.

Mey said people are now taking a new look at entrepreneurs. “Despite the problems we face, entrepreneurs play an important and vital role in an economy. The tensions we are experiencing in wars sometimes have their roots in misery and poverty. ... If people are able to live in peace and security and they have the possibility to work and enjoy a bright future, then we will have fewer problems in the world and more stability.

“Entrepreneurs take the risk to transform an idea into a project to develop and generate new, innovative products to serve the community ... and this role is



*Alamine Ousmane Mey, CEO of Afriland First Bank of Cameroon.*

important,” he said. “Improving our living conditions can only be done by creating wealth — wealth created in a sustainable manner, bearing in mind our social and environmental responsibility. The proper place to do that is in the private sector by promoting enterprises and entrepreneurship, with the support from government acting as facilitator and regulator, as well as the civil society, he explained.

Entrepreneurship generates wealth, Mey said. “If you look at statistics, you will see that job creators, wealth creators, [gross domestic product] developers are entrepreneurs. So we have to devote more attention to this community of players” that contributes to improving living conditions.

Mey said he is looking forward to learning from others at the summit. He said he also hopes to help “create a bridge” among participants to achieve prosperity in a win-win joint venture approach.

“To take advantage of experience” from those in America and elsewhere to learn valuable wealth creation lessons and

take those lessons back home is his goal, he said. “Doing this will help create a bridge of communication, a bridge of exchange. If we do so, we get to know each other much better. When we know each other much better, it is easier to dismiss our differences and work on what we share in common. This is where stability, peace and security can be built into our world today.”

Mey said his bank is an indigenous operation created 20 years ago by local Cameroonians. The bank now has more than \$1.4 billion in total assets, with 500 employees. Most important, he said, Afriland First Bank emphasizes innovative banking services.

Those services, he said, include the Islamic Deposit Account, which facilitates the Muslim community’s access to financial operations with Shariah-compliant solutions. Afriland First Bank also assists the Cameroonian National Hadj Commission and offers Muslims a savings plan to finance religious pilgrimages to Mecca, helps people in rural areas access banking services through their mobile phones and works to stimulate economic growth and development through microfinance lending. It is mobile phone technology, he said, that enables people in the rural areas to join the mainstream of the economy and play their vital role.

Mey said trade between entrepreneurs of different nations is preferable to aid and is the best way of achieving long-term economic growth and development based on human dignity.

“Today, with technology, we can take advantage of knowledge, know-how and experience from America and improve our living conditions, close the gap between the rich and poor and promote a broader, better life for everyone,” he said.

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## U.S.–South Africa Strategic Dialogue Launched

By Charles W. Corey  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The formal launch of the U.S.–South Africa Strategic Dialogue is “hugely valuable” because it provides a comprehensive framework for the U.S.–South Africa bilateral relationship, covering a “huge spectrum of issues,” says the U.S. ambassador to South Africa, Donald H. Gips.

In an April 16 interview with *America.gov*, Gips said the strategic dialogue is an umbrella agreement that will act to “make sure we are getting the most value, both from the private sector initiatives, the government-to-government initiatives and the nongovernmental organization [NGO] initiatives that are going on in country.” All are brought together in the strategic dialogue, he said, into an overall strategy that maximizes the impact of each one.

The signing of the initiative — by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and South African Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane — at an April 14 ceremony was a priority for both the United States and South Africa, Gips said, and shows how important it is to use the partnership to address global issues and regional stability on the continent.

Gips, who was in Washington to attend the signing, spoke to *America.gov* just before returning to South Africa. The U.S.–South Africa Strategic Dialogue was a direct outgrowth of talks between the secretary of state and the foreign minister during Secretary Clinton’s visit to South Africa in August 2009.

Gips said the current U.S.–South Africa Strategic Dialogue is similar to the U.S.–South Africa Bi-National Commission, which existed during the Clinton administration, but is much more flexible. Flexibility is important, he said, because

“some things can go faster, some things can be done at the Cabinet secretary level. Other things are going to be done down in the trenches [at the working level], where it is appropriate to get it done and really keep this as a living process that can take on new challenges without a lot of bureaucratic overlay.”

Gips called the meeting between South African President Jacob Zuma and President Obama earlier that same week, just prior to the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, “very significant.” President Obama met with President Zuma because “South Africa is a priority,” Gips stressed.

South Africa, Gips said, “is critical as an example of a country that is blazing a path and trying to create a multiracial democracy out of a situation that in almost any other context in the world would have led to significant bloodshed and destabilization. South Africa, in my mind, pulled off one of the great miracles of our time, and we want to help them complete that miracle by partnering with them as they tackle the remaining legacies that apartheid left behind — around education, health care, housing, etc.”

Gips said this strategic dialogue is taking place against the background of the World Cup coming to South Africa in June–July 2010. He termed the World Cup “a great opportunity to showcase the beauty of the country, the diversity of the people,” and added that more Americans have bought tickets for the World Cup than citizens of any other country outside of South Africa. For Gips, that illustrates two things about the United States: the deep connection Americans have with South Africa and the fact that the United States is a nation of immigrants.

Americans are coming to the World Cup not just to root for the American team,

but also to cheer for other national teams with connections to their own ethnic heritages. “That is an exciting part of who we are,” Gips said, and symbolic of America’s great cultural and ethnic diversity.

“Part of what I love about that is that is also true of South Africa: it is a mixing pot of people, and what makes it such a vibrant place — the diversity of its people. That,” he said, “is part of why there is such a great affinity between our two nations because we are both multiracial democracies that are dealing with some of the challenges that creates but, even more importantly, all the great opportunities and creativities that creates” as well.

Gips also commented on Zimbabwe, noting that the United States and South Africa share objectives on Zimbabwe that are “100 percent the same.”

“We want to see a prosperous, free, democratic Zimbabwe. ... For South Africa, it is a real-life issue that impacts them every day. They have anywhere from 3 to 5 million Zimbabwean refugees in the country at any one time; it puts huge strains on their ability to provide services to all those people, so they are very concerned.”

“We are constantly in conversation with them [the South Africans] about the right way to keep this process [supporting Zimbabwe’s move to embrace democracy] moving forward, to speed this process up,” Gips said. “We may not always agree on what are the right tactics for doing that, but it is a very healthy and constructive dialogue we are having and trying to find ways that we can work in concert to help the people of Zimbabwe achieve their own freedom and prosperity.” ♦



## Helping the Protectors of Culture in Africa

By Jeff Baron  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The work of saving cultural heritage is being done by museums throughout Africa, and the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation has been providing much-needed help.

In Africa, the challenges are particularly great: Some museums have extensive collections of artifacts but few resources to preserve and protect them, let alone display them as much or as well as curators would like. The Ambassadors Fund has supported a variety of projects to improve conditions in Africa's museums, from the repair or replacement of leaky roofs to the purchase of equipment and training in the preservation of collections.

In Senegal, for example, the fund came to the aid of a museum on Gorée Island, the World Heritage Site at Africa's westernmost tip best known as a point of departure for many slaves taken to the Americas in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The island, off the coast of the capital, Dakar, is a popular tourist destination.

The Henriette Bathily Women's Museum (<http://mufem.org/>) on Gorée preserves rare photographs, traditional art, textiles and other items documenting the role of women in Senegal over several centuries. But both the museum and its collection had been suffering from deterioration. The two problems were related: The museum, located in a house built in 1777, could not keep out the heat, dust, moisture, fierce sunlight and bugs that were attacking the collection.

"Currently, the museum lacks climate control; its windows and doors are also not weatherproofed and ventilation is an issue," said an Ambassadors Fund report. "Gorée is very hot and humid during the



*The Henriette Bathily Women's Museum on Gorée Island explores the role of Senegalese women from before colonial times.*

summer months when powerful rainstorms are common. During the winter months it is quite windy and dusty. The museum's collections have been damaged by exposure to this environment."

Among the improvements made under an Ambassadors Fund grant: air conditioning, caulking and shades for the windows, new electrical wiring to prevent fires, improved lighting, fresh paint, repairs in the galleries, and conservation of "the museum's rare photographs, writings, textiles and other artifacts that document women's contributions to Senegalese society," the report said.

The work also included the installation of new display cases and information panels in French and English, and publication of a catalogue on the museum's collection and women's history in Senegal.

In the Republic of the Congo's capital, Brazzaville, the National Museum suffers

from some of the same challenges as Senegal's museum — a lack of resources plus the heat and humidity of equatorial Africa. The museum, like all of Congo, also struggled through the aftereffects of civil wars in 1997 and 1998–99; a low-level guerrilla war continued until final peace accords were signed in 2003.

The National Museum has display space in a government building, but before it received the Ambassadors Fund grant, its storage space, which contained most of its collection, provided little protection from the elements, resulting in damage to some historical pieces. Its office was little better, and the 15 staff members had to make do with one laptop computer.

The Congolese government agreed to provide better storage and office space, and the Ambassadors Fund grant paid for computers, cameras and other equip-

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## Saving the Sahel's Islamic Heritage

By Jeff Baron  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Revered documents of medieval Islam have been getting another chance at life in Africa's Sahel region. And the site of a great 14th-century mosque is being protected so it can be studied, too.

Thanks in part to a series of grants from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation ( <http://exchanges.state.gov/heritage/afcp.html> ), organizations and government agencies in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Nigeria have begun to preserve vast collections of Islamic and other documents that date as far back as the 11th century. The United States, through the Ambassadors Fund, has provided equipment and expertise for the work for a decade.

The collections reflect the power the region held as far back as 1,000 years ago. Mali was the birthplace of three great empires from the 11th to the 16th century, and those empires — Ghana, Mali and Songhay — built grand monuments and supported Islamic scholarship.

Some of the monuments, such as Mali's



*Thousands of deteriorating Islamic documents, such as these in Nigeria, have been preserved, digitized and catalogued.*

Mosque of Djinguereber in Timbuktu and the Askia Tomb in Gao, have been preserved and still command notice. But the vast mosque that architect Abu Ishaq Ibrahim es-Saheli built for the emperor Kankou Moussa in Gao in 1324, after the emperor's pilgrimage to Mecca, gradually became a victim of disuse and ur-

banization. By the time Mali's government had begun a rescue program for the mosque in 2003, squatters had taken over its ruins.

Excavations turned up many important artifacts and long-buried walls and

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## African Banker Previews White House Entrepreneurship Summit . . .

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President Obama will host the summit, and there will be moderated plenary sessions on key issues, including technology and innovation, access to capital, unleashing youth and women's entrepreneurship, mentoring and networking, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, promoting and enabling business, and social entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurs from around the world

will be attending, along with a host of American entrepreneurs, business executives and top U.S. government officials.

Confirmed participants are coming from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brazil, Brunei, Cameroon, Canada, China, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, The Gambia, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania,

Morocco, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, the Palestinian Territories, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United States and Yemen.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*



## Following an African Melody

By Jeff Baron  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation has been saving beautiful music in Africa.

Although many of the projects supported by the U.S. State Department fund aim to save historic buildings and other cultural sites throughout Africa, some grants have gone to save music, including the traditional instruments, songs and dances in danger of being displaced and forgotten.

In Burundi, for example, a project supported by the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) sent archivists traveling throughout the country with recording equipment. They came back with 230 recordings of traditional songs, and they also gathered old songs from the national radio and television archives.

Since having music in an archive is not the same as having it available, the project also called for the release of recordings. Many of the field recordings were not of high enough quality for release, so some parts were re-recorded in the studio by Burundian musicians on traditional instruments. In the end, the studio produced 176 songs plus a CD of the celebrated Burundian drums.

In South Africa, an AFCP grant supported research into the making of traditional African instruments and the revival of their manufacture. With South Africa's youth embracing newer instruments, the country was losing the elders who knew how to make indigenous instruments, as



*An image from a DVD of traditional Malagasy dance and music, one of the many musical preservation projects the U.S. assists in Africa.*

well as their music.

The project has young South Africans researching traditional instruments and learning to make them under the instruction of elders. Young participants also have been learning entrepreneurial skills to sell the instruments. And traditional music was recorded and scored so teachers could use it in their curriculum.

And in Madagascar, the AFCP supported an effort to preserve the musical and dance heritage. Each of the country's six regions has distinct music and dance traditions that serve as ways to convey moral and cultural values.

The grant helped document the traditional Malagasy dances and the music, instruments, costumes and body decorations that go with them. And it provided material on the dances and music to include in the public school curriculum.

The project resulted in a DVD, Preservation and Promotion of Malagasy Traditional Music and Dance, created in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo and the Malagasy Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture. The video spotlights each of the regional dances and music, as well as information on Madagascar's rich culture.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

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## Clinton: Perpetuation of Mideast Conflict Strengthens Extremists

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton warned that the continued failure to reach a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority results in the continued empowerment of violent rejectionist groups such as Hamas and impedes not only those seeking a peaceful two-state resolution, but also a more hopeful and prosperous Middle East.

Speaking in Washington April 15 at the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, Clinton said the lack of peace threatens “Israel’s long-term future ... holds back the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, and destabilizes the region.”

Improved security for Israelis through their own efforts and the work of Palestinian security forces has led some Israelis to believe “they are protected by walls and buoyed by a dynamic economy and can avoid having to do anything right now,” she said.

“But that would mean continuing an impasse that not only carries tragic human costs, and denies Palestinians their legitimate aspirations, but which threatens Israel’s long-term future as a secure and democratic Jewish state,” Clinton said, echoing her remarks in March that the status quo is unsustainable.

She argued that it is in the interests of Israel, the region and the international community to support the Palestinian Authority’s “two-track approach of pursuing a political settlement and institution building,” and that only those who “traffic in hate and violence” stand to benefit from the continued stalemate.

“In contrast to Hamas, the Palestinian Authority has staked its credibility on a path of peaceful coexistence,” the secretary said.



*Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.*

Hamas, in contrast, argues that a Palestinian state can be realized through violence, and its ability to exploit Palestinian frustration helps to “distract its people from its failure to govern,” Clinton said.

“The Palestinian Authority has the harder job: to convince a skeptical people that peace is not just possible, but the surest route to bettering their lives and achieving their aspirations,” she said.

“Even more than economic opportunities, that path for the Palestinians must lead to a state of their own, for the dignity that all people deserve, and the right to chart their own destiny. If [Palestinian Authority] President [Mahmoud] Abbas cannot deliver on those aspirations, there’s no doubt his support will fade and Palestinians will turn to alternatives — including Hamas. And that way leads only to more conflict,” she said.

The status quo also undermines those on both sides — and in the broader region — who are working to develop functioning institutions and accountable governments, entrepreneurs and economists who are trying to foster growth, and the civil society organizers and activists who are working for “common ground and mutual understanding,” she said.

Although “considerable work remains,” Clinton said, she praised the efforts of Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who are addressing corruption and building accountable institutions as the foundation for a future state. They are also working on other long-term infrastructure like schools, hospitals and a national health insurance program.

Palestinians in the West Bank have seen significant economic growth thanks to improved security and the rule of law, and the secretary welcomed international support and the easing of some Israeli restrictions and road blocks that helped spur the improvement.

However, Israel’s willingness to ease Palestinian access and movement “is not sufficient” to prove to Palestinians that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s embrace of a two-state solution is sincere, she said.

“We encourage Israel to continue building momentum toward a comprehensive peace by demonstrating respect for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians, stopping settlement activity, and addressing the humanitarian needs in Gaza, and to refrain from unilateral statements and actions that could undermine trust or risk prejudicing the outcome of talks,” Clinton said.

The United States “cannot force” a peace solution, but believes that good-faith negotiations can lead to an outcome that will reconcile the goals of both sides.

But Clinton said “agreements between leaders are the beginning, not the end,” and that true peace will also require improving the political climate on all sides in order to mobilize popular support and counter those who advocate violence.

“Peace is possible,” Clinton said. “We will do everything we can to see it happen.” ♦



## Iraqi Forces Take Lead in Combating Extremists

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Vice President Biden and the top U.S. military member praised the increasing strength of Iraqi security forces as demonstrated by Iraqi leadership of a joint operation that killed the two most senior al-Qaida in Iraq leaders near Tikrit on April 18.

Speaking to reporters at the White House April 19 ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2010/April/20100419163115eaifas0.1529352.html> ), Biden said the deaths of Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu Umar al-Baghdadi are “potentially devastating blows” to al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), and demonstrate how Iraqis have assumed the predominant responsibility for securing their country and fellow citizens against violent extremists.

“This action demonstrates the improved security strength and capacity of Iraqi security forces. The Iraqis led this operation, and it was based on intelligence the Iraqi security forces themselves developed following their capture of a senior AQI leader last month,” the vice president said.

Until their deaths, the two individuals “plotted, planned and executed terrorist attacks against the Iraqis,” as well as Americans, Biden said. The operation, the vice president added, “is evidence, in my view, that the future of Iraq will not be shaped by those who seek to destroy that country, but belongs to those who are building a strong and unified Iraq.”

Biden urged Iraqi political leaders to consolidate the security gains against AQI by following up on the country’s March 7 elections to form “an inclusive and representative government that meets the needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people.”



*Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced the successful result of the joint Iraqi-U.S. operation in Baghdad April 19.*

The United States remains committed to ending its combat missions in Iraq by the end of August 2010 and to removing all U.S. forces from the country by the end of 2011, Biden said. The United States will continue its partnership with Iraq in other areas such as “education, cultural exchanges and the development of a strong economy.”

Admiral Mike Mullen, who is chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the American Forces Press Service in Pittsburgh April 19 that AQI has been seeking to restore the level of sectarian violence seen in Iraq in 2006 and 2007 by carrying out a series of suicide bombings in Baghdad and Mosul since August 2009.

“The goal of [those bombings] was to generate sectarian violence, not just the immediate violence,” Mullen said. “[Al-Qaida] leadership has been very focused on trying to reignite the sectarian violence Iraq was fraught with.”

While echoing the vice president’s com-

ment that AQI had suffered “a potentially devastating blow,” Mullen said the group remains a threat, and that Iraqi forces, with U.S. assistance, will continue their efforts against the extremist group.

“Al-Qaida in Iraq has been greatly diminished for a significant period of time,” he said. “Their leadership has been killed and it’s very, very significant in terms ... of its loss of sustainability. [But] this by no means eliminates al-Qaida in Iraq.”

He also praised Iraq’s leadership and security forces for the operation, which he said is an example of their progress since assuming the lead in security efforts from U.S. forces in 2009.

“Their leadership in this particular operation has been significant,” Mullen said.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

## Michelle Obama Tells Youth to Help Empower Each Other

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — In her first solo international visit as first lady, Michelle Obama asked young people in Mexico and around the world to empower each other through service and volunteer work. That will help spread opportunities to other members of what she described as the “youth bulge” — the largest-ever global population of people between the ages of 15 and 24 who now make up 20 percent of the world’s citizens.

Speaking to students at Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City April 14, the first lady said young people everywhere possess the potential to succeed to the benefit of their societies and the world at large, even “in some of the most unlikely places.”

“Ambition and ability are found in every corner of the globe. The question is, how do we ensure that opportunity is too?” Obama asked.

While President Obama and other leaders are working to improve education and create economic opportunities that will help young people, ordinary citizens, including the young, have their own responsibilities, she said.

“It’s not just enough just to change laws and policies. We must also change our perceptions about who can and who can’t succeed,” Obama said, citing “wrong and outdated ideas and assumptions” that have limited educational and economic opportunities due to gender, religion, disability, ethnicity or socioeconomic class.

“Throughout our world history, it has so often been that unlikely hero, that unusual perspective, that improbable journey that has been the key to our progress. So when we dismiss any of our



*Michelle Obama says young people need to help each other to tap otherwise neglected sources of talent and ability.*

young people, when we fail to tap into their potential, we risk losing their promise,” she said.

Even as many university students continue to struggle through difficult economic times, the first lady called on them to take action to spread opportunities to the less fortunate through their career choices or through volunteer work.

“The truth is that those of you who already have a seat at the table must do your part to make room for others who don’t. Young people around the world must reach out to help others realize their talents and make their voices heard,” Obama said.

She cited examples of young people who have become teachers for the disabled, led service projects to help the less fortunate, and performed relief work to help Haiti recover from its January earthquake.

“Each and every one of these young people is working to break down barriers

and to open doors. Each of them is giving others the chances they’ve had to succeed,” she said.

She also encouraged the students to develop their own self-confidence, despite the fact that they inevitably will face difficulties and some may have more difficult obstacles to overcome than others.

“When you start to get discouraged ... I hope that you’ll think about young people like you all around the world who have toiled in laboratories and libraries, in factories and fields, who have marched and fought and bled to make our world a better place,” she said.

“We are going to need the passion and the daring and the creativity of every last one of you” to tackle the immense challenges of the 21st century and make the world a better place, Obama said.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*

## On the Hunt for Stolen Treasure

By Jeff Baron  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — One culture's treasure can be a thief's loot, a smuggler's contraband and a collector's prize. But in case after case, those treasures become the responsibility of the U.S. government, which returns them to their rightful owners.

A customs inspector might raise a question about a shipment. An auction house might worry about an item's source. The Art Loss Register or Interpol, the international police organization, might ask whether an item for sale has been stolen. Or a resident might come forward with something that turned up in a grandfather's attic. The result will be an investigation.

"What was the story? Every investigation is a jigsaw puzzle, and you try to put it together," said Matthew King, acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of International Affairs. "I would say that you never fill in the entire jigsaw puzzle."

When enough puzzle pieces turn up, though, the result can be the seizure or surrender of artifacts and the arrest and prosecution of anyone who knowingly and illegally trafficked in them. "There have been plenty of bad guys who make a business out of smuggling art or antiquities or cultural artifacts," King said.

In some cases, the proper owner is relatively easy to find. ICE agents in Texas seized an early Borchardt-Luger pistol from a collector of antique firearms, and experts for a British auction house confirmed its identity as one of two surviving 1898 prototypes for the famous weapon; it had been stolen in 1996. The United States returned the pistol to Switzerland in 2004.



*Hiding behind ceramic masks in a crate shipped from Peru were a dozen pre-Columbian human skulls. They were returned to Peru.*

In some cases, though, the victim of a theft is an entire nation. International law, including a landmark 1970 UNESCO convention, is designed to protect cultural property. It gives nations the right to control the export of parts of their archaeological and cultural heritage to keep it from being pillaged. (Items taken before such laws went into effect are not covered.)

When a crate of ceramic masks from Peru was dropped at a warehouse in Cleveland, Ohio, in January 2004, warehouse workers found that the masks were hiding some very real human skulls. An ICE investigation showed that the skulls — 12 of them — were more than 1,100 years old, so there was no thought of returning them to family members; instead, they were presented to Peruvian Ambassador Luis Miguel Valdivieso Montano in a ceremony in Washington in April 2010.

Valdivieso expressed his thanks for the recovery and return of the skulls, which

he said "require special protection and defense so they can be enjoyed, valued and properly used by all citizens and passed on for our future generations."

Another investigation started with the suspicions of a customs agent in Miami, Florida. He was examining an ornate, ancient Egyptian coffin in 2008, mostly to make sure it wasn't infested with insects. But he also noticed that the empty sarcophagus lacked the paperwork to prove that the Egyptian government had approved its export.

An ICE investigation showed that the documents with the sarcophagus were fraudulent and that neither the importer nor the Spanish business that exported it

could show that it had left Egypt legally, whenever that might have happened. So the United States seized the coffin as imported stolen property, defended its action in court and returned the sarcophagus to the Egyptian government in March 2010.

In some cases, the contraband is in plain sight. One sculpture, a 1,800-year-old, 200-pound marble bust of Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, was featured on the cover of the catalogue for Christie's auction house in New York, more than 20 years after it and seven other statues were stolen from a museum in Algeria. Interpol called ICE, whose experts worked with Algerian scholars to prove the statue's identity. The auction house cooperated fully.

"I don't think they are shady about it," King said of Christie's and the other major auction houses. "There's so much moving at [Christie's and] Sotheby's, and their name, their reputation is at stake."

*(Continued on page 12)*



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## On the Hunt for Stolen Treasure . . .

*(Continued from page 11)*

In some cases, the item is in the hands of an innocent person — someone who bought the object from a seemingly legitimate source or inherited it. “Maybe you never really did own it,” King said. “That’s where the investigation proves it up: How did it end up in grandpa’s attic?”

When innocent people end up with stolen goods, King said, a finder’s fee is sometimes available to help compensate for the loss of the item. But in any case, he said, the government has the obligation to determine who the rightful owner is and return the item.

To do that, ICE investigators work with experts in antiquities at museums and research centers such as the National Geographic Society, which handled the Egyptian sarcophagus. Some investigators have undergone training at the University of Pennsylvania, which has a renowned anthropology program and museum.

The investigators also work with customs offices in other countries, with the FBI



*A 3,000-year-old wooden sarcophagus was returned to Egypt after a two-year international investigation.*

and other police agencies, with the State Department and with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which deals with ivory and other animal material.

King said the effort to seize and return artifacts won’t end the trade in them. “I

don’t think it’ll quash supply and demand,” he said. “What I do think it’ll do is that legitimate buyers will be much more careful in making out the bona fides of the seller and the provenance of the artifact.” ♦

## Saving the Sahel’s Islamic Heritage . . .

*(Continued from page 6)*

rooms. And the Ambassadors Fund provided a grant to protect the site so it could be documented and enjoyed over the years.

The grant paid for the construction of a protective shelter around and over the site that offers tourists a safer way to view the site and explore Mali’s cultural heritage. The grant also provided for tourist-friendly signs and a colorful booklet that explains the site and the archaeological work taking place there.

The work on Islamic documents, mean-

while, seeks to preserve them and put them within easier reach of researchers who want to read and study them without subjecting them to further wear — and without requiring that they be sent to a collection in one of the wealthier Islamic countries.

In Kaduna, Nigeria, for example, the Ambassadors Fund grant helped Michaelle Biddle, a U.S. expert on the preservation of manuscripts working at the Wesleyan University Library in Middletown, Connecticut, run a three-day training program for workers and scholars at the Arewa House, the Centre for Historical

Documentation and Research at Ahmadu Bello University. Biddle also visited the Nigerian National Archives and other libraries and museums elsewhere in northern Nigeria to assess the state of their collections of thousands of documents and the conditions in which they were kept.

Biddle found severe problems in many of the collections, with damage done or threatened by heat, humidity, mold, harsh light, abrasive dust, insect infestations, chemical fumes, a lack of ventilation and contact between fragile paper

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## Mark Twain: Novelist, Humorist and Citizen of the World

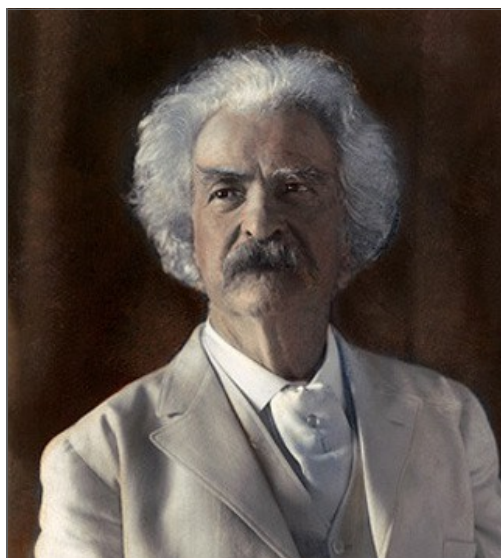
*Shelley Fisher Fishkin, professor of English and director of American studies at Stanford University, is the author or editor of many books about Mark Twain, including Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices, Lighting Out for the Territory, the 29-volume The Oxford Mark Twain, and, most recently, Mark Twain's Book of Animals and The Mark Twain Anthology: Great Writers on His Life and Works.*

By Shelley Fisher Fishkin

William Faulkner called Mark Twain “the first truly American writer”; Eugene O’Neill dubbed him “the true father of American literature.” Charles Darwin kept *Innocents Abroad* on his bedside table, within easy reach when he wanted to clear his mind and relax at bedtime. The Gilded Age gave an entire era its name. Joseph Conrad often thought of *Life on the Mississippi* when he commanded a steamer on the Congo. Friedrich Nietzsche admired Tom Sawyer. Lu Xun was so entranced by *Eve’s Diary* that he had it translated into Chinese. Ernest Hemingway claimed “All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*,” while his fellow Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe cited Huck as the book that spoke so powerfully to his condition in war-torn Japan that it inspired him to write his first novel. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the phrase “New Deal” from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, a book which led science fiction giant Isaac Asimov to credit Twain (along with Jules Verne) with having invented time travel. When José Martí read *Yankee*, he was so moved by Twain’s depiction of “the vileness of those who would climb atop their fellow man, feed upon his misery, and drink from his misfortune” that he wanted to “set off for Hartford [Connecticut] to shake his hand.”

Twain has been called the American Cervantes, our Homer, our Tolstoy, our

Shakespeare, our Rabelais. From the breezy slang and deadpan humor that peppered his earliest comic sketches to the unmistakably American characters who populated his fiction, Twain’s writings introduced readers around the world to American personalities speaking in distinctively American cadences. Adventures of *Huckleberry Finn* was America’s literary Declaration of Independence, a book no Englishman could have written — a book that expanded the de-



*Photographic portrait of Mark Twain, 1906*

mocratic possibilities of what a modern novel could do and what it could be.

Twain helped define the rhythms of our prose and the contours of our moral map. He saw our best and our worst, our extravagant promise and our stunning failures, our comic foibles and our tragic flaws. He understood better than we did ourselves American dreams and aspirations, our potential for greatness and our potential for disaster. His fictions brilliantly illuminated the world in which he lived and the world we inherited, changing it — and us — in the process. He knew that our feet often danced to tunes that had somehow remained beyond our hearing; with perfect pitch he played them back to us.

His unerring sense of the right word and not its second cousin taught people to pay attention when he spoke, in person or in print. (“The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter — it’s the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.”)

Twain’s quirky, ambitious, strikingly original fiction and nonfiction engaged some of the perennially thorny, messy challenges we are still grappling with today — such as the challenge of making sense of a nation founded on freedom by men who held slaves; or the puzzle of our continuing faith in technology in the face of our awareness of its destructive powers; or the problem of imperialism and the difficulties involved in getting rid of it. Indeed, it would be difficult to find an issue on the horizon today that Twain did not touch on somewhere in his work. Heredity versus environment? Animal rights? The boundaries of gender? The place of black voices in the cultural heritage of the United States? Twain was there. Satirist Dick Gregory once said that Twain “was so far ahead of his time that he shouldn’t even be talked about on the same day as other people.”

At the beginning of his career, Twain was lauded as a talented humorist. But the comic surface turned out to mask unexpected depths. (“Yes, you are right,” Twain wrote a friend in 1902, “I am a moralist in disguise.”) Time and time again, Twain defied readers’ expectations, forging unforgettable narratives from materials that had previously not been the stuff of literature. As William Dean Howells once put it, “He saunters out into the trim world of letters, and lounges across its neatly kept paths, and walks about on the grass at will, in spite of all the signs that have been put up from the beginning of literature, warning

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## Mark Twain: Novelist, Humorist and Citizen of the World . . .

*(Continued from page 13)*

people of dangers and penalties for the slightest trespass.”

Humane, sardonic, compassionate, impatient, hilarious, appalling, keenly observant and complex, Twain inspired great writers in the 20th century to become the writers they became — not just in the U.S., but around the world. Writers marveled at the art Twain wrought from the speech of ordinary people — speech whose previous appearance in literature had most often been treated with ridicule. Jorge Luis Borges observed that in *Huckleberry Finn* “for the first time an American writer used the language of America without affectation.” Twain taught American authors from Arthur Miller to David Bradley, Ralph Ellison, Ursula Le Guin, Toni Morrison, and countless others important lessons about the craft of fiction. Some key figures in the visual arts, as well, found reading Mark Twain transformative. Cartoonist Chuck Jones, for example, who played a key role in developing such icons of American popular culture as Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote, and Bugs Bunny, tracks these characters back to his early reading of Mark Twain’s *Roughing It*.

Born in 1835 in the village of Florida, Missouri, Sam Clemens (who would take the name “Mark Twain” in 1863) spent his boyhood in the town of Hannibal, Missouri. In 1847, when his father died, 12-year-old Sam ended his formal schooling and became a printer’s apprentice in a local newspaper office, later working as a journeyman printer in St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and elsewhere. He spent two years learning the river and becoming a riverboat pilot, but his career on the river was

ended by the Civil War. After spending two weeks in a ragtag unit of the Missouri State Guard that was sympathetic to the Confederacy, he set out for the Nevada Territory with his brother and tried to strike it rich mining silver. Although he failed as a prospector, he succeeded as a journalist. He got his first taste of national fame when his “Jumping

In 1899, the *London Times* dubbed Twain “Ambassador at Large of the U.S.A.” He had seen more of the world than any major American writer had before him, and his books would be translated into over 70 languages. Cartoonists made him as recognizable an icon worldwide as “Uncle Sam.” Twain was one of the country’s first genuinely cosmopolitan citizens, someone who felt as at home in the world as in his native land.



*Mark Twain, citizen of the world, continues to define American literature on the 100th anniversary of his death. His work influenced generations of writers around the globe.*

Frog” story [“The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”] appeared in 1865. He courted Olivia Langdon of Elmira, New York, and published *Innocents Abroad* in 1869, to great popular acclaim. He married, started a family, and began writing the books for which he is best known today while living in the family mansion he built in Hartford, Connecticut. Financial problems forced him to close the house and relocate the family to Europe in the early 1890s. Later in that decade he would pull himself out of bankruptcy by embarking on a lecture tour that took him to Africa and Asia. As the 19th century ended and the 20th century began, he condemned his country — and several European powers — for the imperialist adventures they had pursued around the world, and he became vice president of the Anti-Imperialist League. The accolades and honors bestowed on him in his later years — honorary degrees, birthday celebrations — failed to fill the hole in his heart created by the death of his wife and two of his daughters. He died in 1910.

“What is the most rigorous law of our being?” Twain asked in a paper he delivered the year *Huckleberry Finn* was published. His answer? “Growth. No smallest atom of our moral, mental or physical structure can stand still a year. ... In other words, we change — and must change, constantly, and keep on changing as long as we live.” This child of slaveholders, Twain grew up to write a book that many view as the most profoundly anti-racist novel by an American that clearly spoke from his own experience. Troubled by his own failure to question the unjust status quo during his Hannibal childhood, Twain became a compelling critic of people’s ready acceptance of what he called “the lie of silent assertion” — the “silent assertion that nothing is going on which fair and intelligent men are aware of and are engaged by their duty to try to stop.” Experience also taught him not to underestimate the transformative power of humor. The greatest satirist America has produced wrote that the human “race, in its poverty, has unquestionably one really effective weapon — laughter. Power, Money, Persuasion, Supplication, Persecution — these can lift at a colossal humbug — push it a little — crowd it a little — weaken it a little, century by century: but only Laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of Laughter nothing can stand.” ♦



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## Going Green a Military Win-Win

**By Karin Rives**  
**Staff Writer**

**Washington** — The U.S. Department of Defense's mission always has been, and continues to be, to defend the nation. It's in that same spirit that the military, the United States' largest energy consumer, is now embracing conservation and sustainability.

Energy efficiency, U.S. defense officials say, is good for national security and it can save the lives of soldiers in combat — not to mention money. The agency expects to trim at least \$1.6 billion in expenses after investing \$780 million in new energy-savings projects between 2004 and 2011.

Such realities, coupled with a renewed focus on energy efficiency within the Obama administration, have prompted the Defense Department to set a more aggressive emission-reduction target than any other federal agency: 34 percent by 2020, instead of the 28 percent goal set for the federal government as a whole. Many of the projects that will help the agency achieve that goal already are under way.

"The volatility of the oil market in recent years and how that drives your budget has made us realize that we need to become less dependent on oil. And this is very much tied together with our mission," said Joe Sikes, the Defense Department's director for facilities energy. "The tether of fuel on the war front, and delivering fuel to the front, is very dangerous. Truck convoys are prime target for attacks, so if you have fewer convoys it probably makes it safer to fight the war."

Sikes oversees a \$120-million-a-year con-

servation program focused on making all 300,000 buildings on military bases in the United States and beyond waste less energy. Project activities include insulating buildings, equipping them with solar panels and installing electric meters to track energy consumption. All buildings, which come in every size and shape, will have meters by 2012.

### NAVY TO FLY MILITARY HYBRID JET ON EARTH DAY, APRIL 22

Earlier this year, the Army announced that it would lease 4,000 electric vehicles over the next three years for passenger

ogy. That day, a so-called Green Hornet F/A-18 jet powered by fuel made from the Camelina sativa plant mixed with regular jet fuel will take off from the Naval Air Station Patuxent River, southeast of Washington.

As has been the case before, the military can be a trailblazer for the private sector. The nation's Defense Energy Support Center recently signed an agreement with the Air Transport Association of America, which represents all major commercial airlines, to promote commercialization of environmentally friendly aviation fuels. The airline industry

and the Defense Department together consume more than 1.5 million barrels of jet fuel daily, which means such collaboration, if successful, could have a major impact on fossil-fuel emissions.

"By combining our talents and experience, we are better positioned to explore cooperative market engagement for fuel," said James May, the association's president and chief executive, in a statement March 19. The collaboration would help improve the financial prospects for alternative fuels and accelerate fuel certification efforts, he added.



*The U.S. Navy will showcase a new hybrid military jet on Earth Day to show its commitment to energy efficiency.*

transport, security patrols and delivery services at its bases nationwide. The Army is also in the early stages of testing hybrid military logistics vehicles for possible purchase — all part of an effort to dramatically reduce its dependency on oil.

Similar initiatives can be found across all branches of the U.S. military. In March, the U.S. Air Force flew, for the first time, an A-10 Thunderbolt II military jet on a blend of biomass and conventional fuel. On Earth Day, celebrated April 22, it will be the Navy's turn to demonstrate its commitment to alternative fuel technol-

The Defense Department is also continuing to serve as a test bed for new technology. The agency is inviting private companies to demonstrate their new energy technology on a military base and is funding the projects with \$30 million from its conservation budget. A couple of projects are already under way — one energy data management project and one focused on innovative photovoltaic (solar) buildings.

"We provide that initial market for these companies, and in some cases it will help our mission, too," Sikes said. ♦

## The Americas Move Forward on Clean Energy

By Cheryl Pellerin  
Staff Writer

**Washington** - More than 30 energy ministers and delegates from 32 Western Hemisphere countries spent two days in Washington discussing collaborative approaches to a low-carbon future and new partnerships that will help address clean energy and energy security concerns in the region.

The Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) meeting was co-hosted April 15–16 by the U.S. departments of State and Energy, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Organization of American States (OAS). Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed participants and announced new initiatives April 15. U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Steven Chu convened the meeting.

"We've had two days of very productive discussions," Chu said April 16 as the meeting ended. "There's widespread agreement that we need to move forward with a clean energy agenda for the Western Hemisphere. Together we reaffirmed the need to promote clean energy development and deployment, enhance energy security, and fight energy poverty through individual and collective actions among governments, the private sector and civil society."

The meeting is the latest in a series of gatherings that began in April 2009 at the Fifth Summit of the Americas held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. There, President Obama invited all countries of the Western Hemisphere to join in an energy and climate partnership. ECPA is a voluntary mechanism through



*Energy Secretary Steven Chu convened a meeting of ministers and delegations from across the Americas.*



*Delegations from 32 countries met at the Organization of American States building in Washington to discuss energy partnerships.*

which all Western Hemisphere governments may lead multicountry energy initiatives.

Five countries in the region — Brazil, Canada, the United States, Mexico and Venezuela — are among the 20 largest producers of world reserves of fossil fuels. Yet, OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza said in an address to attendees, 40 million people there still have no access to electricity.

This, he said, "translates into inefficient sanitation, weak education systems and the inability to develop productive, income-generating activities." He warned that problems caused by climate change would exacerbate the challenges.

### GROWING COOPERATION

On April 15, Chu announced new projects that include efforts to advance electricity interconnections in the Caribbean, support biomass development in Colombia, promote earthquake-resistant energy infrastructure, and create an Energy Innovation Center at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to expand project development and financing.

"Dozens of countries from across the Americas have come together today to promote clean energy future for our hemisphere," Secretary Chu said. "By expanding our cooperation and collaboration on key energy and climate issues, we will lay a foundation for broad-based economic growth while helping to protect our environment."

The initiatives include:

**Caribbean Electrical Grid Interconnection:** The Department of Energy will provide technical support, including hosting a workshop, to begin exploring the potential for a Caribbean-wide transmission system that would give the region access to electricity from renewable energy sources.

**Innovation Center:** DOE and IDB will coordinate resources for regional projects and activities in the center. It is the latest in a series of Regional Clean Energy Centers throughout the hemisphere, including a Costa Rican Energy Efficiency Training Center, a Wind Center in Mexico, an Energy Efficiency Center in Peru, and a Renewable Energy Center in Chile.

**Biomass Resources in Colombia:** Under its Low Carbon Communities of the Americas initiative, DOE announced a

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## The Americas Move Forward on Clean Energy . . .

*(Continued from page 16)*

project to develop a technological plan for power generation through heating sugarcane and palm residues at very high temperatures.

**Earthquake Preparedness:** In response to recent earthquakes in Haiti, Chile and Mexico that highlighted vulnerabilities to energy infrastructure, DOE will host an earthquake preparedness workshop, bringing together leaders in the region to hear from experts, including U.S. national laboratories, on hazard characterization, structural design standards, and advanced simulation capabilities for ground-motion estimation and structural response.

DOE and Argentina's Ministry for Federal

Planning, Public Investment and Services signed a memorandum of understanding that promotes cooperation between DOE and the Argentine Energy Secretariat on clean-energy technologies.

### **BILATERAL OUTREACH**

In connection with ECPA, Chu met with Canadian Minister of Natural Resources Christian Paradis and discussed energy issues that included investments in energy efficiency and clean fossil fuels. Chu also met with Chilean Minister of Energy Ricardo Raineri Bernain to discuss earthquake reconstruction, renewable energy deployment and other clean-energy topics.

After the ECPA ministerial meeting, Chu and other senior U.S. government officials met with Venezuelan Minister of

the People's Power for Energy Rafael Ramirez and other members of the Venezuelan delegation.

According to an April 16 statement from DOE, the United States appreciates the major commitments Venezuela has made to help the people of Haiti recover, including ensuring the continued operation of critical power plants there. The two countries agreed to restart dialogue on technical energy issues in the months ahead.

Want to do something about climate change? Join the global conversation on Facebook ( <http://www.facebook.com/ConversationsClimate> ) or share your comments below. ♦

## Helping the Protectors of Culture in Africa . . .

*(Continued from page 5)*

ment, plus air conditioning for the workroom, so the staff could research and catalogue the more than 2,200 masks, musical instruments, statues, pottery objects, and arts and crafts in the collection. The collection is stored behind the museum's small display rooms. The grant also supported bringing Elisabeth Cornu, head objects conservator for Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, to Brazzaville to train museum staff in conservation and in documenting objects in the collection.

In Burundi, the collection of the National Museum in Gitega was in danger of destruction by people who valued it: members of the public. Cultural artifacts were displayed in the open, either on the floor or mounted on wooden boards, and visitors could — and often did — handle them and wear them down. The objects were also subject to damage from dust

and sunlight.

The Ambassadors Fund paid to give the collection simple protective measures. Artifacts were put behind glass panels, under electric lighting, and windows were covered with a film to block harmful ultraviolet light.

Visitors can no longer handle the valuable artifacts, but they can understand them better with the addition of descriptive labels in Kirundi, French and English. The museum also has been enhanced with speakers that play recordings of traditional Burundian music.

And in Kenya, the Old Town of the island of Lamu is considered one of East Africa's oldest Swahili settlements. As a trading center for several centuries, Lamu has been a mixing bowl for Bantu, Arab, Persian, Indian and European cultures, and it is on the list of World Heritage Sites. It also is known as a center for scholarship

on the Islamic and Swahili cultures.

The Lamu Museum, home to an extensive ethnographical collection, was badly dilapidated. An Ambassadors Fund grant supported an extensive restoration: replacement of rotten ceiling joists and a worn-out roof, electrical and plumbing repairs, and refinishing work on walls. As a result, the museum is now one of the most popular tourist activities in town, with the nominal admission fees generating income for other cultural preservation and activities.

The Ambassadors Fund has also helped with the preservation of handwritten Swahili manuscripts and a 200-year-old map in the Lamu Fort library.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦*



# Stability in Niger Delta Is Key to Nigerian Oil and Gas Wealth

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The key to Nigeria's economic progress is stability in the Niger River Delta, where the bulk of the country's oil and natural gas is produced and where a smoldering militancy and sabotage of production facilities threaten progress for the region's 30 million residents, energy experts say.

David Goldwyn, the State Department's coordinator for international energy affairs, told an April 13 panel discussion sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies that the Obama administration is "strongly committed to helping Nigeria with its problems" and "will bring the resources of the U.S. government" to bear in areas such as expanding electricity use to create jobs and bring economic benefits to the delta.

Nigeria is important to U.S. policymakers, Goldwyn said: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton visited in August 2009 ( <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2009/August/20090813144410dmslahrellek0.9818537.html> ); President Obama met with Nigeria's acting president, Goodluck Jonathan ( <http://www.america.gov/st/nonprolif-english/2010/April/20100412113953WCyeroC0.0207178.html> ), on April 11; Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson has visited a number of times ( <http://www.america.gov/st/africa-english/2010/February/20100223163915esnamfuak0.6749384.html> ); and the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission ( <http://www.america.gov/st/develop-english/2010/April/20100407154636dmslahrellek0.8201715.html> ) was launched April 6.



*A Nigerian army gunboat provides security against militants near Calabar in the Niger Delta.*

All these efforts, the U.S. official told the panel, are meant "to bring all the parts of our government together to work with Nigeria as partners on solving some of the core problems facing the nation." But "the lead ... on strategies and plans ... will come from the acting president and his Cabinet."

The panel discussion was also attended by Oronto Douglas, a human rights lawyer and Niger Delta activist who co-founded Africa's foremost environmental movement, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria, and who has advised the Nigerian government on strategic issues of community and the environment. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen was also in attendance.

Thijs Jurgens, Royal Dutch Shell's senior adviser in government relations for Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, told the panel Nigeria is a country blessed with abundant energy resources. He said it is the world's 11th largest oil producer and seventh largest holder of natural gas, accounting for 75 percent of the Nigerian

government's revenues.

But, since 2005, production has been significantly cut, Jurgens said, with more than \$50 billion lost, much of it revenue to the Nigerian government, through theft, called bunkering, and sabotage by militant groups claiming the region has been environmentally devastated by oil companies without receiving a fair share of revenues.

After negotiating principally with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Nigerian government announced an amnesty late in 2009 that has had some success in getting militants to hand over their arms, but violence continues in the region.

Jonathan, who was in Washington attending the Nuclear Security Summit, told a gathering sponsored by the Atlantic Council that the delta amnesty program consisted of two important phases, disarmament and rehabilitation. "We are progressing" in both areas, he said, with a goal of "retraining and creating oppor-

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[http://www.america.gov/](http://www.america.gov)

Telling America's story

**Saving the Sahel's Islamic Heritage . . .**

*(Continued from page 12)*

and such corrosive materials as leather and acidic paper and cardboard. She offered recommendations for storing the documents and for making them accessible to the public with far less risk of damage.

A second American led a three-day workshop at Arewa House on cataloging and digitizing Arabic manuscripts. The Ambassadors Fund covered the costs of computers and scanning equipment, as well as computer training.

As a result, Islamic and other historical documents that had been too fragile for much handling can now be examined halfway around the world.

The Ambassadors Fund has supported similar efforts in Mali, Niger and Mauritania. The project at the Mosque of Djinguereber in Timbuktu helped preserve 1,500 Islamic manuscripts, many from the 13th and 14th centuries. The city was at

the height of its importance in the Islamic world then, as a trading post between West Africa and Europe and as a center of scholarship. Many of the texts, used by Islamic diplomats who traveled between Timbuktu and Mecca, teach conflict resolution and tolerance.

The Ambassadors Fund grant paid for the restoration of several rooms within the mosque library that house the collection, including the installation of lighting and secure bookshelves and display cases to protect the collection, improved ventilation and creation of a catalog of the manuscripts.

In Mauritania, the Advanced Institute for Islamic Studies and Research received a series of grants to conserve and photograph documents, some dating to the 11th century. And in Niger, more than 4,000 documents, some dating to the 14th century, were conserved and scanned for public use. ♦

**Stability in Niger Delta Is Key to Nigerian Oil and Gas Wealth . . .**

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tunities" for ex-militants.

Shell's Jurgens said the oil industry "wholeheartedly supports" the amnesty program. He said his company has helped set up a retraining program for 12 ex-militant leaders. However, he added that the amnesty initiative is at "a low [point] and militants are losing their patience. We need to speed up the program."

Panelist Dimieari Von Kemedi, a grassroots activist and conflict resolution specialist who heads the Due Process and e-Governance Bureau for Nigeria's Bayelsa State, agreed. He told the panel the delta peace process was being ham-

pered out but that the slow pace of "demobilizing militants and alternate job creation" was a "worrying trend."

Von Kemedi commends the Nigerian government for its efforts to defuse the crisis through negotiations and the amnesty program, but, he said, "the war against corruption needs to be escalated. It's not necessary for American [charities] to go to the delta to build schools. All that needs to be done is to hold the Nigerian government accountable" for its plan to provide a 10 percent equity stake to communities in the delta in the delta's joint-venture oil partnerships.

The U.S. goal of expanding electricity use in the delta was a good idea, Von

Kemedi said, but "without the privatization of the power sector, it is not possible to ensure economic expansion and sustainable jobs."

Jurgens concluded that of the 30 million people living in the delta, "most remain poor ... after years of oil wealth." He suggested the U.S. government could help the region by emphasizing good governance and anti-corruption; increasing regional security through surveillance of the Gulf of Guinea; and pushing for more transparent and credible elections.

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